position is set for taking an image of the individual object commodity, previously.

Namely, the commodity position database 14A stores the position and the posture (the orientation) of the TV camera 20A as commodity position information. With the commodity position database 14A, when the TV camera 20A is arranged at the registered position in the registered posture and is prompted to take an image, TV camera 20A automatically takes an image of an individual object commodity being correlated with the position information in the commodity position database 14A. If a plurality of TV cameras 20A are installed in an individual selling area, the commodity position database 14A also stores information about which TV camera would be used to take an image of an individual object commodity, which information is registered by being correlated with a corresponding commodity name together with the position information.

In the shop of the tele-inventory system 100, since the commodity position database 14A stores a correlation between the name of an individual object commodity and positioning information about the position and the posture of the TV camera 20A (position information about a position of the individual object commodity), it is possible for

an inventory employee, even if having no information about the layout of the selling area, to obtain an image of the desired selling area by only transmitting instructions designating an object commodity name to the control computer 10A (the camera controller 13A) from the inventory computer 50A or 50B, or the mobile information terminal 50C, enabling an effective inventory at low cost.

As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, since the customer information terminals 70, each operated by a customer of the shop, are communicably connected to the control computer 10A of the shop via the telephone line 60 in the illustrated embodiment, an image of a selling area where a desired target commodity is sold is displayed on a non-illustrated display of the customer information terminal 70 by only sending the control computer 10A a direction containing the name of the desired target commodity to activate the commodity position database 14A and the camera controller 13A. As an advantageous result, customers can obtain and see the image, and can confirm whether or not a target commodity is available at the shop in real time before going to the shop, thereby receiving supplementary services.

(A-7) Description of a function for assisting in operation of the tele-inventory system:

A function for assisting in operation of the

tele-inventory system 100 (the inventory computers 50A and 50B, the mobile information terminal 50C) will be now described with reference to FIG. 7.

In the illustrated embodiment, an inventory employee, which operates the inventory computer 50A or 50B, uses the marker 55, the counter 56, the mouse 54A or 54B when making an inventory (such as counting object commodities, checking expiration dates).

As shown in FIG. 7, when an inventory employee indicates an image of an individual object commodity with a cursor and clicks the images with the mouse 54A or 54B one by one to count object commodities, the marker 55 labels the clicked image of the individual commodity (located at the position at which the mouse 54A or 54B has been clicked on the management display 53A or 53B) with a star-shaped predetermined mark M1. The inventory employee repeats this indication and clicks with respect to a plurality of images of object commodities to be inventoried so that the images of the plural object commodities are labeled with the predetermined mark M1. At that time, the counter 56 counts the clicks thereby automatically counting the clicked images of the object commodities. Further, labeling the clicked images of the object commodities with the predetermined marks M1 helps the inventory employee to clarify images of an object commodity that has